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ABSTRACT

The 1990's may well be characterized as the decade of renewal. For community colleges, the process of renewal will entail refocusing the mission and redefining the culture of two-year institutions as part of a nationwide attempt to restructure our approach to higher education. But, is it possible to modify both college mission and culture? Since change has become the hallmark of contemporary society, we have the unenviable task of managing the process or being overwhelmed by it. Managing change in this period of restructuring should begin with an examination of organizational values. Values clarification, in turn, starts with a review of institutional purpose. An assessment of purpose allows all groups within an institution to develop insights regarding organizational beliefs; orientation toward clients; treatment of human, fiscal, and physical assets; and salience of mission. The assessment process, which should include a review of college practices that effect the teaching/learning environment, supports the institutional community in redesigning and reordering the processes, procedures, and systems that comprise culture. Once the redefinition of organizational purpose is established, culture will reform itself around the redefined purpose. The new system evolves by establishing a shared vision of the future. Researchers suggest that if institutional values are clear, shared, and affirmed in action, personnel are likely to trust the organization and work to implement its stated purposes. (JMC)

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ENHANCING TEACHING-LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: A CHANGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

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Introduction: Organizational Culture and Institutional Development

The 1990's may well be characterized as the decade of renewal. The Institute for Future Studies at Macomb (MI) Community College identifies annually the "top 10 issues" facing a community colleges.(3/5) Three of them, organizational wellness (6), campus collegiality (8), and ethics (10), call for efforts to refocus the mission and redefine the culture of two-year institutions. The concept should not be surprising. In her assessment of higher education in the 1980's, The Unfinished Agenda, Eaton suggests that "We left the decade much as we entered it: we still have serious concerns regarding the content of curricula, student performance, and appropriate pedagogy."(6/88) She assesses the challenge of the 1990's in the following way: "We look toward academic reform efforts that must culminate, in the 1990s, with changes in the academic experience.... While it is not realistic to expect that issues of this magnitude will ever be resolved, the national deliberation can lead to the careful restructuring of our approach to higher education efforts."(6/88, 10-11) Where should we begin the restructuring?

The answer is surprisingly clear. Change is the hallmark of contemporary society. We have the unenviable task of managing the process or being overwhelmed by it. Bennis suggests that "Change occurs in two primary ways: through trust and truth or through dissent and conflict."(1/27) Obviously, the former is the desirable scenario. He is clear regarding the implications. "Positive change requires trust, clarity, and participation."(1/27) Is it possible to modify both college mission and culture? Eaton has an interesting perspective. First, she suggests that the basic mission of community colleges need not be restructured. However, "It does require the establishment of a

contemporary framework of values by which the future 'work' of the community college will be organized, understood, and evaluated."(5/4) Culture becomes the focal point. The implication of revising organizational values as we initiate a process of cultural change requires analysis.

Values: The Source of Institutional Direction

The impact of organizational values on institutional culture and direction became an area of significant research in the late 1980's. Pascarella and Frohman suggest that much of the assessment of organizational strategy is based on "essentially sets of values that guide everyone in the organization."(11/24) What are the implications of value sets and how may they be modified?

Sociological research indicates that organizational values begin with clusters of individual values. Kouzes and Posner in a survey of 2,300 private and public sector managers indicate that values provide a prism through which all organizational behavior is viewed. Further, significant energy and direction emerge when individual values are "in synch with" organizational ones. Finally, "shared values:

- Foster strong feelings of personal effectiveness.
- Promote high levels of company loyalty.
- Facilitate consensus about key organizational goals and stakeholders.
- Encourage ethical behavior.
- Promote strong norms about working hard and caring.
- Reduce levels of job stress and tension."(8/192-193)

If we are to implement institutional renewal through the development of a contemporary framework of values, cultural modification, it is important that we determine what constitutes effectiveness. A logical starting point is values clarification research.

In assessing the research base, three variables emerge. They are clarity, consensus, and intensity. They may be defined as knowing the organization's purpose; understanding, sharing, and agreeing with its values; and feeling strongly about the worthiness of the values. As we prepare to manage change through value redefinition and cultural modification, attention must be given to applying these variables.

John W. Gardner, executive director of INDEPENDENT SECTOR, suggests a synthesis. "The challenge is not to find better values but to be faithful to those we profess."(7/8-9) Action is based on two components. First, it is necessary to assess the value taxonomy that exists in the institution. Second, effort is required to determine the degree of congruity among personnel regarding the accuracy of the taxonomy. Gardner suggests that the implementation of the values clarification process constitutes a "powerful process of [cultural] regeneration."(7/9) Since our goal is to engage change through institutional development, initiating value redefinition is essential. What action should we take?

Environmental Scanning: Where Are We Now; Where Do We Want To Be?

Value clarification begins with a review of institutional purpose. Pascarella and Frohman are succinct: "Organizations need a framework that permits the processes, procedures, systems, and organizational 'nuts and bolts' to be . . . in tune with one another."(11/xii) A

viable organizational culture is integrated. They recommend that a process of institutional "environmental scanning" take place "to determine the organization's reason for being."(11/23) An assessment of purpose allows all groups within the institution to develop insights regarding organizational beliefs, orientation toward clients, treatment of human, fiscal, and physical assets, and salience of mission. Clowes presents three characteristics that make assessment possible: (1) a positive climate for change set by leadership, (2) a nurturing environment established through relations among members of the organization, and (3) involvement of a critical mass of the members of the organization in the process.(4/6) The assessment will produce an agenda for action.

Agenda development involves the institutional community in redesigning and reordering the processes, procedures, and systems that comprise the organization's culture. Pascale assesses change management as consisting of two interrelated actions: creating and breaking paradigms. Change does not occur in a vacuum. Organizations possess a culture; it is expressed in values. To direct change is to actively, aggressively, force redefinition of purpose. Once the redefinition of organizational purpose is established, culture will reform itself around the redefined purpose.(10/11-14)

Determining where an organization is and where it wishes to go demands values realignment. The task has been compared with installing a new guidance system. Actions undertaken with a faulty guidance system are at best meaningless and, at worst, harmful to an institution's mission. The new system evolves by establishing a vision of the future.

Further, the scanning process allows the members who comprise the organizational culture to determine if a gap exists between the ideal vision and the real environment. Then, a plan of action may be developed that reduces the gap and improves the alignment of values. As Gardner suggests, "All renewal is a blend of continuity and change."(7/22) It is essential to establish a balance between continuity and change to maintain institutional vitality.

Conclusion: If Not Us, Who? If Not Now, When?

In 1988, former president of Harvard University Derek Bok presented an interesting perspective on higher education's role in cultural renewal. "Although the potential exists to respond to almost every issue on our formidable national agenda, the readiness to do so does not. ...Most universities continue to do their least impressive work on the very subjects where society's need for greater knowledge and better education is most acute."(2/121-122) Is there an alternative to his pessimistic outlook?

Pascarella and Frohman suggest that if institutional values are clear, shared, and affirmed in action, personnel are likely to trust the organization and work to implement the stated purpose. Further, personnel are more likely to engage the societal needs engendered by change.(11/104-105) O'Hara's research validates their findings. The premise of his study is "Teachers who believe that they are treated with respect and valued as professionals are more effective than those who do not believe so."(9/1) The review of institutional practices that impact the teaching/learning environment are values driven. Where consensus emerges, effectiveness is reported. Since community colleges are

predominantly teaching institutions, cultural change will be most immediately impacted by value change as it relates to teaching and learning. Meeting society's requirements, therefore, demands focus on the instructional environment of the community college. Eaton presents two suggestions that are central to our conceptual framework. First, the process of cultural modification will require a new dialogue whereby all members of the college community "devote themselves to the effectiveness of community college education as an important shared responsibility carried out from a basis of shared values." Second, the development of a symbiotic problem-solving approach will allow the college to deliver a "carefully defined set of programs and services in cooperation with other public and private organizations."(5/254-255) Her suggestions contribute to a paradigm based on the values clarification process.

Clowes reinforces her findings. He presents four variables that are essential to effecting the modification of organizational culture. The first is that a critical mass of the individuals who make up the organization share common values. A second is that a symbiotic relationship exists between the organization and its personnel. The third is that the leadership of the organization is committed to empowering its members. And the fourth is that a common purpose or purposes--a shared vision--exists within the organization.(4/9) The paradigm suggests a dynamic tension which contributes to institutional vitality. The essential question is: If not us, who? If not now, when?

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